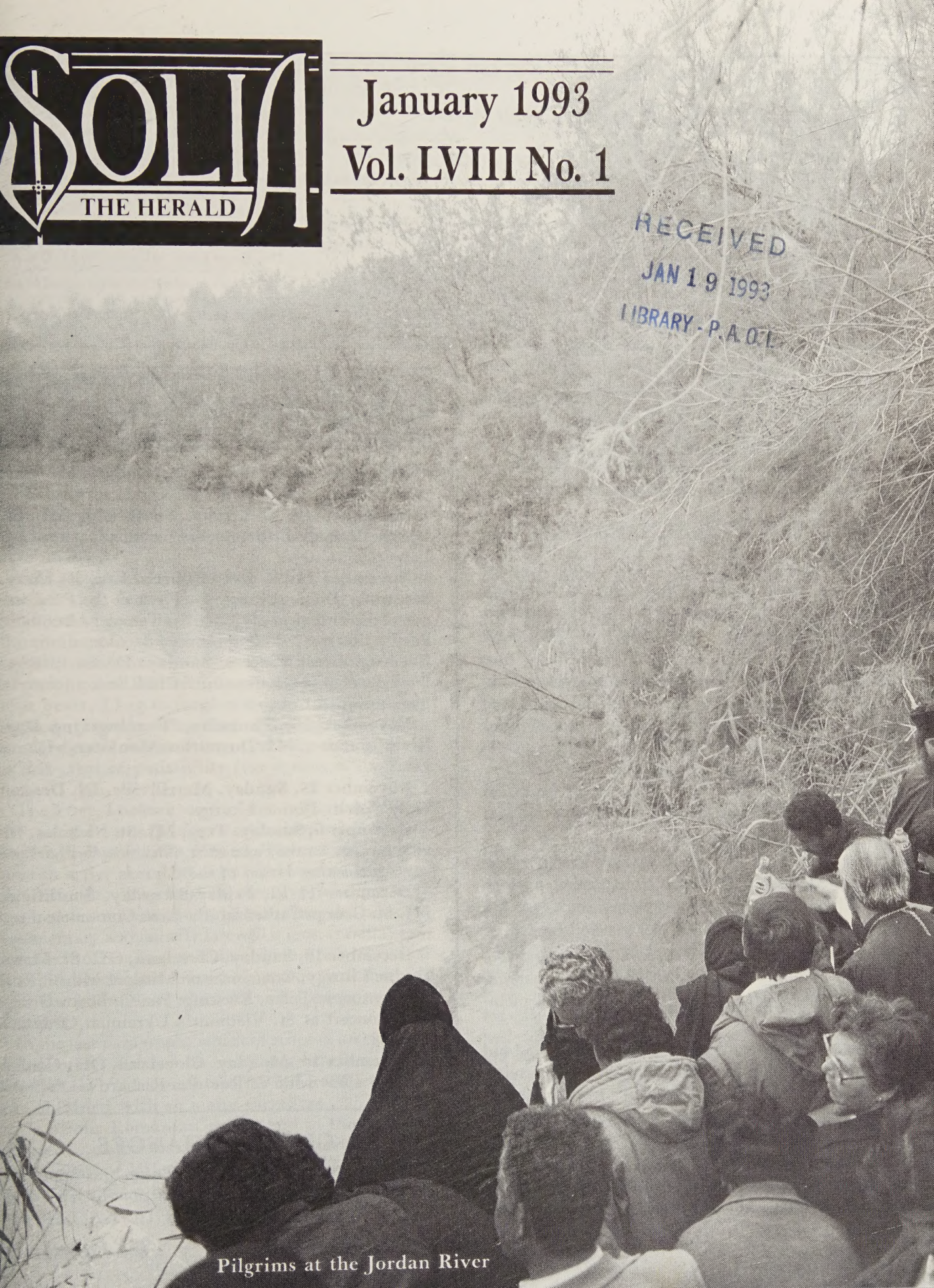


SOLIA

THE HERALD

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Pilgrims at the Jordan River

SOLIA

THE
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GOLDY AND GEBHARDT SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED THROUGH THE EPISCOPATE

The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America is again taking applications for the **Goldy (Dumitru Golea Goldy-Gemu) Scholarships** and the **Alexander O. Gebhardt Scholarships**. Two scholarships are offered by each foundation.

Scholarships will be awarded to undergraduate students of Romanian origin according to the established Requirements and Rules. It is imperative that all forms be filled out completely and all copies of supporting documents accompany the applications. Therefore, upon applying, advise whether you are a recent high school graduate or are already enrolled in college.

To give time to applicants to assemble all of the necessary documents requested, we have fixed the **Cut-Off Date** as **March 31, 1993**. Note on the envelope for which scholarship you are applying, since each has its own separate application.

Recipients will be notified by mail. The decisions of the Award Committee are final, and we ask that you do not phone the Episcopate nor the Committee members.

An applicant who receives adequate financial aid from his/her family, from the school he/she is attending, from other scholarship funds, or from any other source, should seriously consider not applying in deference to those applicants having greater financial need.

Applicants must obtain forms from: **The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, P.O. Box 309, Grass Lake, MI 49240-0309.**

HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

November 15, Sunday. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Divine Liturgy.

November 19, Thursday. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Preliminary meeting of part of By-Laws Committee.

November 21-22, Falls Church, VA. St. Mary. Saturday: Divine Liturgy for Feast of the Presentation of the Birthgiver of God in the Temple. Afternoon: Parish Retreat, "Community & Communion." Evening: Great Vespers. Sunday: Divine Liturgy. Blessed a reader. Gave out three Chi-Rho scout awards. Parish dinner.

November 26, Thursday, Thanksgiving Day. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Divine Liturgy.

November 29, Sunday. Merrillville, IN. Descent Holy Spirit. Divine Liturgy.

December 6, Sunday. Troy, MI. St. Nicholas. Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St. Nicholas. Festive Banquet celebrating Hram of the Church.

December 11-12, Friday-Saturday. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. By-Laws Committee meetings.

December 13, Sunday. Cleveland, OH. St. Mary. Divine Liturgy. Conference on Missions with V. Rev. Fr. Constantin Tofan. Evening: Pan-Orthodox Christmas Concert at St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

December 14, Monday. Cleveland, OH. Conference on HFR with V. Rev. Fr. Richard Grabowski.

CLERGY CHANGES

Very Rev. Fr. Constantin Tofan was appointed Chairman of the Department of Missions by His Grace, Bishop Nathaniel, effective May 1, 1992.

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY: ARCHBISHOP VALERIAN

"I am leaving this world with gratitude in my heart towards our Heavenly Father for granting me the privilege for 33 years of serving His Holy Orthodox Church, my Romanian heritage and my beloved adopted country, the United States of America."

Testamentary Letter: Archbishop Valerian Trifa

This opening statement of a single-page, seven paragraph testamentary letter was left by Viorel/Valerian Trifa, son of Dionisie, retired Archbishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, to describe the value he placed on his life-time's activities. A witness to the faith of his fathers, staunch believer in his people and their land (Țara Moșilor in Transylvania), and tenacious citizen of the land to which he had immigrated; such indeed, was Viorel Valerian Dionisie Trifa.

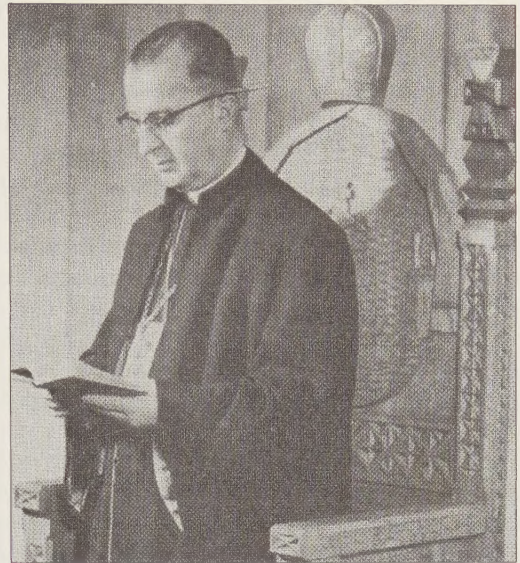
January 28, 1993, will mark the fifth anniversary of the death which came suddenly on him while he was yet in exile far from those who had benefited from his talents and dedication, away from those who would have wanted to be with him in his last moments but were unable.

This testamentary letter tells of his joy on being **"called and elected"** by the Romanian Orthodox faithful; the **"great burden,"** which, nevertheless gave him true happiness; having put forth **"my best efforts in all"**; with thanks to **"those who understood my intentions and efforts."** It continues, **"Find it in your heart, I beg to forgive me, as I have already forgiven anyone who has erred before me or wronged me,"** and in closing, **"be very conscientious in this great responsibility** (the destiny of the Episcopate)."

The letter, I believe, was written in Romanian and, post mortem, was quickly rendered by someone into English. If one re-thinks it into the Romanian language, one can arrive at something a little warmer and more like Valerian. The English seems to be more of a strained and necessary translation than the personal testamentary and fatherly farewell it most certainly was intended to be. In particular, there are a few final thoughts which after re-reading, stand out in these ultimate words and on which it is an appropriate time to reflect.

In the last paragraph, which in scope is an exhortation to unity, just before the closing benediction, we hear him say, **"... maintain the full freedom which was obtained with so many sacrifices . . . for the pride of our Romanian origin and of the beloved adopted country in which you now reside."**

These last of Valerian's final lines, even if not intended by him, subconsciously identify him and his ministry primarily or at least closely with those who



†Archbishop VALERIAN

themselves are from Romania, with those who, like he, were born in Romania and found themselves residing in North America in an "adopted" country. Of course, the letter was addressed to the clergy and laity of the Episcopate which jurisdiction includes Canada and the United States and which would necessarily include those who were, in fact, living in their own country of origin and not merely "residing" in an "adopted" country.

The meaning of these last, culminating lines of a few words, I believe, reflects the tensions, the struggles, the "many sacrifices" demanded of numerous European/American church leaders like Archbishop Valerian. They only hint at the intense personal demands made on such leaders in the ethnic North American communities, demands which are all-consuming, because they entail one's entire force of being, one's own identity.

Valerian Trifa, elected to be the hierarch for the Romanians "outside Romania" (if he held to his claim to succeed Policarp Morusca and the original mission entrusted to the first hierarch by the Romanian Church, which he did), remained personally concerned with Romania, its people and history. Nevertheless, he put his talents to work in the New World Episcopate which had called him to serve. None would dare say that he did not give himself to his ministry. He wed his love for his homeland to that for the flock he pastored in North America.

He was an "ethnarch" in the traditional sense of the word, and most of his troubles came because of this. Those inimical to him and the Romanian people "outside Romania" cleverly so identified him as the leader

Cont. on page 4

POEMS FROM COMMUNIST PRISONS IV

PRAYER OF PEACE

by Nichifor Crainic

Glory to Thee O Lord, for this night,
in moonlight my sleep is bathed.
To the depths of peace my dream submerged.
I have plucked the scent of ripe fruit.
Glory to Thee O Lord for this night.

It resembles the night of Thy Holy Birth,
when Thou didst break the seal of the ancient curse,
Thy Peace a star over Bethlehem
spilling the light of hidden knowledge.
It resembles the night of Thy Holy Birth.

An angel left the portals open,
a soundless song glorified Thee,
the Hosts stirring blue air with flightless wings
towards the abyss of undreamed-of-peace.
An angel left the portals open.
Give me forever more Thy Heavenly Peace.

The world's peace lies prostrate on the rivers of blood
and carries the seed of future hate.

Thy Peace is reflected in all beings that have life,
The defeated, having it, is the one who defeats.
The world's peace lies prostrate on the rivers of blood

Give me also Thy Heart's peace, O Master,
a flame that is not blown out in the tempest,
that I might win the war against evil
for dust passes away, the soul endures,
Give me also peace of heart, O Master.

Thou cool breeze of those burnt at the stake, O Christ,
sweetness of those torn by lions
in the arena of death, O my God,
be Thou sunrise to the evening of my life,
Thou cool breeze of those burnt at the stake, O Christ.

And lift me, O Lord, to heavenly peace
for Thou art forever my immovable creed,
the love of which I cannot have enough
and the hope which frees me from the earth.
Lift me up, O Lord, to Heavenly Peace.

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Cont. from page 3

who was to bear the burden of his people, his "mil-
let" in the understanding prevalent in the old Otto-
man Empire.

He remained a "Romanian" Bishop in the New
World while witnessing to the "catholicity" of the
apostolic faith, overseeing the particular Romanian ex-
pression of that timeless faith and carrying into the pub-
lic the universality of the truth. Valerian, like many
others, had to live with both feet straddling two conti-
nents while reaching with his heart for heaven from the
earth.

A great part of this tension, this "great burden",
the "best effort", was expended in that process of con-
serving while also sharing; of defining while adapting,
of being comfortable in the familiar while venturing
courageously into the unknown North American scene.
This knowledge of how to balance between the needs
of the Romanian immigrant and those of the Ameri-
can born citizen does not come easily, and the personal
sacrifices are rarely considered by others.

Valerian Trifa, son of Dionisie the school-master,
however, was able to find peace even amidst unrest;
to make decisions although confronted with apathy; to
settle for happiness even in tribulation. He loved his

complex flock, and he earnestly tried to identify what
was good about North America so as to gain as much
as would be useful while giving effectively.

He did much to foster a united Orthodox witness in
North America. He was not narrow in his ethnicity nor
critical of others, but he did demand that his own na-
tive land and its history were due the equal respect
which was given to other people.

We owe to his memory and to our sense of honor
to recall him on the fifth anniversary of his death.

Thank you for answering our call! We also made sin-
cere efforts to help you carry your burden! If you tried
to call out the best in us, we certainly also responded!
Your flock supported you since your election, each per-
son in particular ways. While to err is human, to for-
give is Divine, and God does forgive! The destiny of
the Diocese, the Episcopate, the Church of the first pi-
oneers was, has always been and remains foremost in
our lives. We shall not forget God's mercy on the
Romanian people in Europe, nor shall we nor our chil-
dren belittle his blessings on the New World.

Finally, let us invoke on him his own final benedic-
tion on the Episcopate: "**May the Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ have you in his loving care now and
always.**" ✠

†NATHANIEL, Bishop

THEOPHANY: REBUILT AND RENEWED

The great feast of the Baptism of Christ (Theophany) has many basic Christian themes. The troparion of the day emphasizes that Christ's baptism by John in the Jordan made known the worship of God as Holy Trinity, because the voice of the Father bore witness to Jesus as the Son of God, and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, rested on Jesus. The feast therefore reveals who God is: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Another theme of this feast is what our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished for human nature through his own baptism. The following hymn from Cosmos the monk, emphasizes this aspect of cleansing, regenerating, recasting and refashioning the human race.

He who covers himself with light as with a garment (Ps. 103:2) has condescended for our sakes to become as we are. Today he is covered by the streams of the Jordan, though he has no need to be cleansed by them; but through the cleansing that he himself receives he bestows regeneration on us. O wonder! Without fire he casts anew, and without shattering he refashions; and he saves those who are enlightened in him, Christ our God, the Savior of our souls. Great Compline, Lity verse

Our Lord could have destroyed the creation and started all over again, but he did not. His creation is too precious, too beautiful, too good to be trashed. Even the centuries of the separation of the creation from God through man's sin did not totally ruin it. The image of God in man was covered with mud, but it could be cleaned. The relationship between God and man was broken, but not irreparable.

I suppose that as members of modern "throw-away" society, we find Jesus Christ's great act and effort to rebuild and renew the human race and all of creation difficult to understand. Nowadays, when something doesn't work, in most cases it is thrown away and replaced with a new model or a new part, unlike in the times of the Psalmist who cried out: **"God, create a clean heart in me, put into me a new and constant spirit . . . renew my joy . . . save me from death . . . rebuild the walls of Jerusalem"** (Ps. 50). The time, energy and effort to repair what is broken outweighs the value of the product.

Not only material things, but even relationships between people are treated as a commodity which can be cast off, thrown away, when they are no longer useful, desirable, or convenient. Gone are the days of commitment and the preservation of relationships, which demand personal sacrifice and lead to growth.

What about human life itself? Even it is not sacred anymore! Our civilized western world barely blinks an

eye when disposing of human life through the dishonorable treatment of the elderly, physician assisted suicides, the "harvesting" of fetal tissue for research, and the destruction of life in the womb.

What has happened to the name of Jesus? Has it become too familiar to us? We prepare with excitement and great effort to meet or be in the presence of a celebrity or a high government official, but how do we prepare to meet Christ? Do we make prayer, attending church services, and doing good works in the name of Christ a priority in our lives? Are we lukewarm toward Christ? Remember what Christ's message was to the Church in Laodicea: **"I know all about you: how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other, but since you are neither, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth."** (Rev. 3:16)

Look how valuable we are! Look how loved we are! The Son of God, through whom everything was made, he who sits at the right hand of the Father, who has no sin, whose love is unending and power is immeasurable, came down "into the trenches" with us. Not only did he come down, but he left his high office and became exactly as we are, except he did not sin.

His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. (Phil. 2:6-8)

Let us marvel and contemplate with awe and even fear, the great humility and expression of total love which Jesus Christ has shown to us. In this great love, he lowered himself to become like us. Then he who needs no cleansing, took our sins upon himself and cleansed our human nature in the Jordan River, through the hand of a man, the Prophet and Forerunner John. Later, he suffered crucifixion and death, but rose on the third day, so that the gates of Paradise closed by Adam's sin would be opened again, making possible humanity's sharing in the divine eternal life, the life for which we were created.

Our Lord gave us this mystery of Baptism through which we are cleansed, die and rise with him to new life, to a life rebuilt and renewed, so that we may serve him now and be ready to meet him on the day of his awesome and second coming.

Let us follow our Lord's example in our daily lives, seeing the value of life, and seeking to rebuild and renew it with his help.

Jesus Christ's action saved us, and thus, **God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus, and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11) ✙**

David Oancea

MISSION TO ROMANIA— AUGUST 8-25, 1992

Continued from SOLIA, December 1992, p. 6.



Rohia, August 14: Arrival of pilgrims to the monastery for the feast of the Dormition as they walk in procession from their parish churches.

Saturday, August 15; Dormition of the Theotokos — Rohia to Alba Iulia (Day 8)

At 7:30 we awoke, but none of the three of us felt rested. Yesterday was glorious, but too long and too much! The water in the house, which had gone out yesterday afternoon, came back on. We washed in cold water and got ready for the Divine Liturgy on this great and Holy Feastday. Because of the language difficulties, and so many priests present, it was decided that only Fr. Dan of our party would serve, which left Fr. David and me free to take photos before we preached. Now the crowd had grown to 35,000! Many listened over loudspeakers on the mountain hillsides, out of sight from the altar area. In pop-American lingo, we're talking a Christian Woodstock, a spiritual Superbowl! Fr. David gave his testimony of conversion from pentecostalism to Orthodoxy, and Fr. Dan wanted me again to preach and teach on our heavenly liturgy out of Isaiah 6:1-9. The service, including the preaching, went for 3½ hours, and the people seemed to want still more. If the mission ended here (or even Tuesday night) it would have been worth it all. The Abbot, Fr. Justin, was incredible.

After lunch with the monks (exceptional food — the

fast is **over!**), packing, some photographs and tearful goodbyes, we stopped in the nearby village of Tirgu Lapus at the dean's house, another Fr. John, to meet the van full of our literature and Fr. Dan's brother, Nick, and the driver. The rig consisted of a large Mercedes Benz van and a covered trailer — both **packed** with boxes containing 150,000 Orthodox booklets. We drove three hours to Dej, delivered several boxes of booklets, stopped again for dinner, and drove another five hours to Alba Iulia, arriving exhausted and bone-tired at 1:00 a.m. Bishop ANDREI and his household, assuming we were detained, had gone to bed. Finally, Fr. Dan was able to awaken one of the nuns who graciously welcomed us and showed us to our rooms. We unloaded the van until 2:00 a.m., said goodbye to the driver who wished to head home (another two hours), and went to sleep about 2:30 a.m.

Sunday, August 16 — Alba Iulia (Day 9)

We staggered out of bed about 8:30 a.m. to bathe and leave for church at 9:15. There was no hot water, and the cold bath finally woke me up. The Liturgy, conducted by His Grace, Bishop ANDREI — a young energetic man who was made bishop in 1989, just after the Revolution — was preceded by the consecration of a Church. The building, named St. Anthony parish, was originally built in 1769 in a nearby village. It was recently reconstructed in Alba Iulia, an historic city of 150,000 people. Fr. Dan, Fr. David and I all participated in the signing of the consecration letter, the sealing of the relics and the washing of the altar.

The Divine Liturgy itself began about 10:30. We moved outside, under a canopy at a temporary altar and some 1,500 people were on hand. A new priest, Fr. Stephen Raphael, was ordained by the Bishop. Though everything is in Romanian, it is fairly easy to follow along. Fr. Dan told us what to say and do as we concelebrated with the bishop and numerous other clergy. After the Liturgy, I spoke about twenty minutes telling of our journey to Orthodoxy. The consecration and Liturgy, including the ordination and the Bishop's sermon, lasted four hours.

We drove with Bishop ANDREI to a nearby restaurant for an agape meal with parish leaders, celebrating the consecration of the new/old church. Then, it was back to the Bishop's residence for a short nap. They woke us at 5:30 p.m. for a 6:00 vespers. This was the first time we felt we were too tired to preach one more word, but we did so anyway. Dragging ourselves out of bed for vespers, Fr. David spoke briefly on John 3:16. But the evening had just begun!

At 7:00, along with the Bishop, we hurried on foot from the majestic cathedral across the city park to the

Cont. on page .



A panorama view of the pilgrims at Nicula Monastery on the eve of the feast of the Dormition. By the time of the Divine Liturgy the next morning, approximately 100,000 pilgrims had gathered together.

Cultural Hall, the former Communist community center. There, waiting for us, was a turn-away crowd of over 1,000 people! A wonderful Romanian choral group, conducted by an area priest, and ranging in age from young children, to teens, to adults, to aged people, started and ended the evening with song. In between, Fr. David preached the first hour, from 7-8 p.m., I the second. During my message some rancorous teenage boys tried to set the building on fire to disperse the crowd, but Fr. David and others ran the boys off and put out the fire. My text that night was again Isaiah 6, including the passage "the house was filled with smoke." It certainly was! We returned with gratitude to the Bishop's residence at 10:00 p.m. for supper and bed.

Monday, August 17 — Alba Iulia (Day 10)

We slept till 8:30, took a cold bath, had breakfast, and enjoyed a walking tour of Alba Iulia (which means "White Julia;" nobody seems to know the meaning of the name). We returned at about 12:30 p.m. to meet the bishop over 1:00 lunch. We were all to drive to Rimet monastery about 40 minutes away, but my back was sore, so His Grace and Frs. Dan and David went without me. I met in the late afternoon for two hours with a young Romanian deacon named Dimitru who appears to have a genuine gift of evangelism. He edits the diocesan newspaper and loves Jesus Christ.

Fr. David returned to our room at 11:30 p.m. to report that he, Fr. Dan and the Bishop had a wonderful evening with the nuns at Rimet. Fr. David preached on our journey into the Orthodox Faith. And by request of the Bishop, he also emphasized frequent communion, prayer and a burning heart for God to the 40

nuns who listened. Enroute to Rimet, the entourage also stopped at a monastery called Afteia, housing about ten monks, all under the age of 24.

Tuesday, August 18 — Alba Iulia to Tirgu Mures (Day 11)

We arose for breakfast at 8:00, after having been bitten by mosquitoes all night in our room, and thus having poor sleep. After the meal, we met with Bishop ANDREI to discuss funding from America for his seminary. Then we packed up and said goodbye, and gave gifts of American soap, a New Testament and small clock to "Maica Apa," the delightful nun who waited on us. We loaded into a white Alfa Romeo jeep-styled vehicle pulling a small metal covered trailer. Our driver from the episcopate, Nick, was fast but accident-free after 20 years behind the wheel.

It was about 6:15 p.m. when we reached the Holy Trinity Cathedral at Tirgu Mures for 6:00 Vespers. Fortunately the service had started. We vested and served. The handful of people there listened intently as I told of our journey to Orthodoxy. Fr. David taught on Christian obedience patterned after Mary. On the surface, this stop looked like a waste of time — except that a television station sent their cameraman to film our sermons. For the next several days we were on national TV, preaching the Gospel throughout Romania!

Thankfully, our hotel this night was clean and had hot water. And there were no mosquitoes! At check-in, we were carefully scrutinized, and we turned over our passports for half an hour. We ate together with the dean and the secretary of the local district, Fr. Nick and Fr. John, respectively, in a small back room of the hotel dining area.

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Rev. Frs. John Reeves, Roman Braga and Gregory Rogers speaking to a crowd of about 600 (75 clergy) at a seminary in Caransebeș.

Wednesday, August 19 — Tirgu Mures to Suceava (Day 12)

Our first stop was absolutely unscheduled. Our driver said as we entered Bistra, "This town has a huge church being built by laypeople. They had an old priest who refused to build an appropriate church (the old one looked like a dented tin gasoline can), so they sent him on a three-week vacation and started in building!"

We said, "let's stop!" It was magnificent!

Five years of construction and they are about two-thirds finished. It is a cathedral if I have ever seen one. The faithful were there working — both men and women. These people are in no way rebellious, just industrious. As with the builders in Nehemiah's day, "the people had a mind to work." A layman leads the effort, and he, together with his wife, insisted we come briefly to their home. They are a modern-day Priscilla and Aquilla, and we all made a donation to the building and parted with hugs and tears.

Down the road another hour or so was the town of Toplita. We stopped at St. Elijah monastery where the first Patriarch of Romania and his parents are buried, and the Abbot, Fr. Michael Goia, hosted us for lunch.

Borsec, down the road another hour, is perhaps the best center for mineral water in Europe, maybe the world. We stopped for a cool drink and also bought some gifts.

Across the mountains we came to the monastery of Sihastria where the most revered holy man in Romania resides, Fr. Elie (Elijah) Cleopa. He is 81, the author of several books, and "sees in the Spirit": during confession he tells people their sins and then cures without them saying a word! What a wonderful visit we had with him — especially the part where he told us of living in the forest as a hermit 9½ years with the deer and the bears, "my good friends."

We had supper in Falticeni, concluding with cake and a visit to a nearby bazaar. Then we drove on to the monastery of St. John the New at Suceava. The accommodations were wonderful, as was the hospitality of Archbishop PIMEN, but (oh-oh) the mosquitoes are back again!

Thursday, August 20 — Suceava to Putna (Day 13)

The mosquitoes bit us all night long, so we had poor sleep. But there was hot water in the morning which enabled us to shower.

First off in the morning was a radio interview with Fr. David and me, with Fr. Dan interpreting. It was a state-run secular station, but an Orthodox young man, Emmanuel, who works for the station, got us on the air. And the interviewer seemed to be Orthodox. We did a fairly strong broadside assault on the man-made traditions of the sects. The interview was taped for later broadcast and re-broadcast.



Children being baptized at an orphanage in Arad. 142 children were baptized in one morning.

After the interview we visited a small Orthodox chapel on the site of a soon-to-be-built Cathedral, where we would return to preach at 5:00 p.m. It was then on to a 16th century monastery right in town, and a visit with the nuns. They, along with their spiritual director, Fr. Constantine, were busy restoring the church and buildings. I read them Isaiah 58:10-12, and a special encouragement to them in their work.

We drove on to Dumbraveni and visited the parish of another Fr. Constantine, dean of the region. Three old men at the church gave us towels for our icons. The priest and his family live in a simple, peaceful countryside home with sheep, pigs, rabbits and chickens in the barn out back. It made me think of our old country home in Grand Junction, Tennessee, in the 1970s.

We arrived back at the monastery of St. John the New too late for lunch with the Archbishop, so we ate by ourselves. We grabbed some of our luggage, preached at the downtown chapel after vespers and drove toward the monastery at Putna. Enroute we stopped at another centuries-old monastery housing several nuns. Adjacent to the grounds, a group of some 150 Protestants were having an outdoor camp meeting. Frs. David, Dan and myself walked over to talk with them, and others from the monastery followed us. The preacher was a Mennonite from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and when his interpreter needed a Romanian Bible, Fr. Dan stepped forward with his! We had hoped they would ask us to speak, but they did not. So we visited awhile with the leaders and left.

It was about 10:00 p.m. when we reached the monastery at Putna. The monks seemed unfriendly, and we realized nobody told them we were coming! Thus there was no preparation for any speaking opportunities in Putna. Fr. David and I went to bed, not realizing

Cont. on page

ing that Fr. Dan and his brother stayed up until 12:30 talking with two of the monks about the purpose of our journey.

Friday, August 21 — Putna to Radauti to Moldovita (Day 14)

Rising from sleep, we knew we were in trouble: we were scheduled to be in the churches, but nobody was informed. It was time to call on some of our more radical tactics of the old days. Fr. David spoke to about 50 people in the church at the monastery, including some of the monks. There was a good response.

Over breakfast with Bishop GHERASIM, we decided to make up some hand-lettered posters and mobilize our forces and some monks to hand out literature and talk with people on the street. We learned of one nearby village named Vicovul De Jos where the Protestants had put on a big effort and stolen people from the Orthodox Church. (We later learned the two Orthodox priests there had been in-fighting, which gave opportunity to the sects.) "Let's go there first," we said in unison. We wanted to be as frontal as possible in our approach.

When we pulled into town, we immediately dispatched Frs. David and Dan to the Pentecostal preacher's home. He was gone, so they talked with his wife, announced our presence, and had a good visit with her. The rest of us split up into two teams of two men each, passing out our booklets, confessing Christ and inviting people out for the service that night. It felt like Acts 29! People gathered around us by the dozens to listen. We briefly visited the new village church, then said goodbye. Several people promised to come that evening, and we loaded them up with literature and posters — which the Baptists there later tore down (I can't imagine why! All the posters said was that former Baptists and Pentecostals in America had become Orthodox — come and hear.).

We drove next to the dean's house in nearby Radauti, took a short nap, and then hit the market-place in town to hand out booklets and invite people to the Cathedral across the way for vespers and teaching at 6:00 p.m. Again, total strangers swarmed around us to talk and listen.

Our driver for this part of the trip was a young deacon, George. We named him "George the Quick" for his driving habits: everything except his accelerator foot was Orthodox! George went from fairly quiet to totally radical as he caught the spirit of evangelism passing out the booklets and talking of Christ on the village streets!

At 6:00 p.m. the priests wisely did a shortened vespers, and Fr. David and I were preaching from the Scriptures by 6:30, calling the people to give their lives fully to Christ. About 500 had showed up! As I began

preaching, I asked those who came because we met them and gave them literature to raise their hands. About one-third of them did. It made us wish we would have worked the streets in more places.

Later, we drove to Moldovita where Mother Benedicta hosted us at the monastery. She and all the nuns emitted great joy in Christ. I told her she reminded me of the Mother of God. She fed us supper and we went to bed rejoicing. This was my favorite monastery.



Radauti, August 21: Rev. Frs. Peter Gillquist and Dan Suci preaching in the Cathedral.

Saturday, August 22 — Moldovita to Suceava and to the train depot (Day 15)

Mother Benedicta had fired up the wood-burning hot water heater in the Bishop's quarters so I could have my first hot bath in three days. She's a saint! After breakfast, we preached in the monastery Church — Fr. David on the Cross, I on Mary — to the nuns and many visitors. Many listened with tears of joy. We distributed literature and said farewell to everyone.

George the Quick had two brushes with the Grim Reaper as he sped us on to the monastery at Humor. We preached at the Church, Fr. David on John 3:16, and I told of the convert churches in America. The nuns served us coffee, and it was on to Voronet for a brief stop. Several vendors displayed their wares outside the monastery, and we purchased some tablecloths and a rugged sheepskin jacket for Fr. David.

Now it was back to Suceava and the monastery there. After lunch we re-packed our bags, I wrote in this journal, and we headed for the church. This parish houses the remains of St. John the New. The Archbishop held Great Vespers, then the blessing of bread, wine, oil and wheat, and **then** matins — 2¾ hours in all. By the time we were to preach, we were exhausted. Fr. David taught on John 14:6; I did Hebrews 10:24-32.

Cont. on page 10

It was nearly time to catch the train to Bucharest, but the Archbishop insisted on feeding us first. We boarded the train at 10:00 p.m. Fr. Dan had gotten us tickets in the sleeping car for the seven hour trip. We dozed off about 11:30 p.m. to the clickety-clack of the tracks below and the warm summer night's breeze coming in through the open window.

Sunday, August 23 — Bucharest (Day 16)

We pulled into the station at Bucharest at 5:30 a.m. It was tough getting up and dressed. Fr. Dan hailed a cab and it was off again to the Boulevard Hotel. Fortunately they let us check in right away, and we went upstairs to bed.

After attending Church, (Fr. David spoke for 10 minutes after the Liturgy), we went to lunch at a "fine" restaurant — probably the best of the trip. We rested at the hotel in the afternoon, then met Fr. Dan and his wife for dinner in the evening and a walk through the park. This was most definitely a day of rest.

Monday, August 24 — Bucharest to Frankfurt (Day 17)

What a busy morning, especially for Fr. Dan. He was at the train depot at 8:00 a.m. to meet and greet Frs. Roman Braga, Gregory Rogers and John Reeves. This was our morning for both teams to rendezvous in Bucharest in time for a 10:00 a.m. taped interview on national television. After the TV interview, we were scheduled to have lunch with a 33 year old Bishop, THEOPHAN, and then go on to the airport by 4:00 p.m. for our 6:00 flight to Frankfurt.

Everything up to and including the train arrivals went fine. Everyone arrived at the hotel, and at 9:30 we hailed two cabs to the TV station. We arrived at the studio about 9:50 and were on the set by 10:30. But the aged camera refused to roll. They kept saying they would have it fixed shortly. Finally at 11:30, they told us to take a lunch break. We were back about noon and the red light finally went on at 12:45.

For an hour and a half, despite the discomfort of the hot studio lights, we had the joy of recounting our conversions to Christ and to Orthodoxy. Fr. Roman Braga provided the opening introductory words in Romanian. Then I moderated the remainder of the program in English with Fr. Dan interpreting. I took the first 25 minutes to tell of our journey to Orthodoxy. Then Fr. David gave his testimony. Frs. John and Gregory told of their experiences in preaching the Gospel from place to place over the past two weeks. We closed the English-speaking portion warning the viewers not to follow the sects and cults, but to stay and be committed to Jesus Christ in the fulness of the Orthodox Faith. Fr. Roman did a wonderful ten-minute wrap-up in-

cluding his own pilgrimage with Christ during his eleven years in a Romanian prison where his "faith moved from out of the Orthodox books into my heart."

By the time the taping ended, we had missed lunch with the Bishop. Our hostess at the TV station called in our regrets to him while we hurried back to the hotel to finish packing. Frs. John and Gregory rushed out to buy gifts for their families, something they had been unable to do as they travelled. At about 4:00 p.m. we rode two cabs to the Bucharest airport. Customs was amazingly easy here (and in Frankfurt), and we boarded the plane after a short delay at 6:15 p.m. for Frankfurt. Joining us on board were 40 some "non-denominational Baptists" (right!) who were with "International Crusades," and who had preached in Baptist churches at different villages in Romania. I must admit I had fun telling them we had preached to crowds of 10,000, 35,000 and 100,000. (They hate it when that happens!). We had some opportunity both in the airport and on the plane to enlighten some of them to Holy Orthodoxy.

When we reached Frankfurt about 8:30, we were pleased to learn our hotel, Novotel, had free airport shuttle service. So we gathered up our luggage, found the van, and drove to the hotel. We sat and visited in the restaurant till about 10:30, and headed to bed.

Tuesday, August 25 — Frankfurt to New York City to Santa Barbara (Day 18)

We checked in our luggage, relaxed for 45 minutes in the Admiral's Club, and were in the air shortly after 10:00 a.m. It is my delight to be sitting next to a Jewish psychologist from New York named Ann. She is wide open to talking about Christ as Messiah, has rejected Him as God, but is not sure why. "What would

Cont. on page 117



The entire mission team at the television studio in Bucharest: (L-R) Rev. Frs. Roman Braga, David Ogan, Peter Gillquist, Dan Suci, Gregory Rogers, John Reeves.

ST. NICHOLAS ALLIANCE CELEBRATES 80TH, PLANS FUTURE

Parishioners and friends gathered over the weekend of November 7-8, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the parish, having as a theme, "Behold how good and pleasant it is to dwell together in unity!"

An underlying celebration was also the anticipation of building a new church and social hall complex. Ground has been purchased on Sawburg Avenue near State Street, and a Spring ground-breaking is anticipated.

Vespers was scheduled for Saturday evening. His Grace, Bishop NATHANIEL, was met and greeted at the doors of the church with bread and salt by Parish Council President, Nick Gavrila, with flowers by Steven Bosca, and with the Holy Gospel. Clergy in attendance were Very Rev. Frs. P. Stanciu (Dean) and C. Tofan; Frs. R. Samoila, I. Pac-Urar and Deacon John Schmidt.

Responses were given by the cantors: Nick Gavrila, Aurel Bosca, George Hampu, John Rasinar and Emilian Pampa.

The Ladies Auxiliary, under the presidency of Mrs. Aurelia Gavrila, prepared and served an evening meal in the church parlours for all the guests present.

On Sunday morning, after the Matins, a Hierarchal Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Grace and priests, P. Stanciu, R. Grabowski, R. Samoila, I. Predescu visiting from Rimnicul-Vilcea and Dn J. Schmidt. Responses were given by the parish cantors and the choir, directed by Marie Iremie.

After the Eucharist, His Grace presented Rev. Fr. Raymond Samoila to the parish as their new administrator. Giving him the Holy Gospel Book, the bishop reminded all present that the priest is the father of the parish and is to be involved with all areas of parish life, not the least of which is in the administration.

A banquet was prepared and served by the Ladies Auxiliary to approximately 500 guests at the Don Pancho Facility. Nick Gavrila and Helen Inderwish both served in the capacity of "Master of Ceremonies." Guests from the community were introduced, including Mayor Julius Tonges. The "St. John the Wallachian" Ensemble, under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Remus Bleahu, offered a limited dance and vocal presentation.

His Grace, Bishop NATHANIEL, gave the main address in which he exhorted the faithful and guests to be true to their calling as Orthodox Christians and to thank God for the past years, for the present benefits, and to call on his blessings for the proposed new building project.

Guests from the Ohio and Pennsylvania areas were also acknowledged, including the past President of the Parish Council of St. John Church, Salem, Leo Grove. The two parishes merged recently with the hope of strengthening St. Nicholas and preserving something of St. John. The sale of the Salem church and its financial patrimonium will go toward the new complex.

Congratulations to those who prepared the anniversary celebration festivities. ✂

Participant

ROMANIAN TRIP *Cont. from page 10*

you look for in the Jewish Messiah that Christ didn't have?" I asked her. "Really, nothing," she said. She gave me her address, and she planned to come to the Orthodox lectures I'd be conducting on Long Island in September. She met the other priests on the plane, and we all said goodbye when we landed in New York at 1:00 p.m. Fr. John Reeves left us to fly to Texas.

The five-hour layover at JFK lasted **forever**. Finally at 5:45 Fr. David and I said goodbye to Fr. Gregory Rogers, and we boarded the plane for San Francisco — a five-hour flight. I read, and he slept and then talked with another Jewish lady about Christ. We made a quick change of planes in San Francisco, and headed on to Santa Barbara. Conchetta was there to meet Fr. David; Marilyn and PJ there to greet me.

A trip of a lifetime, and the opportunity to preach the Good News of the Kingdom to a newly-freed nation, has to come to a wonderful end. ✂

V. Rev. Peter Gillquist

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A REMEMBRANCE OF FR. JOHN N. TOCONITA FROM HIS FAMILY

It has been nine years since the passing away of Rev. Fr. John N. Toconita. Fr. John, as he was lovingly called, was a sincere, caring and sensitive person. Whenever someone was feeling pain, he would take it to heart. He felt that the world would be a better place if people cared more for each other.

Besides being the personal secretary to Archbishop Valerian, administrator of the Vatra Camps, organizer of the Church Congress, and a wonderful friend to many, Fr. John was a beloved brother and uncle to his family back home in Philadelphia.

He loved us in a very deep and caring way. And, we loved him also. Even with his many duties at the Vatra and his dedication to the Church, he would put his heart into every moment he had time to share with his family. He was very dear to his sister, Celie Maximo, and her husband Steve; and, although there was a great distance between them, they were able to continue a loving and close relationship with many visits, telephone conversations and letters. This love was shown by the many long distance trips — often in adverse weather conditions — that Celie and Steve made over the weekends in order to meet with Fr. John. We still remember how happy he was when he received candy from his sister so that he could give it out to his friends at Christmas and Easter.

Fr. John had a playful sense of humor and a youthful spirit. This could be one reason why the youth of our Church not only looked to him for guidance but also considered him as "one of them."

Father John also cherished his roots and finally had an opportunity in 1977 to visit Romania and part of his family who lived there. He traveled all over the country, visiting churches and monasteries. Wherever he went, he brought joy and left wonderful, unforgettable memories.

To this day, our family feels a deep loss over the death of Fr. John. He was the most kind, considerate and caring brother and uncle someone could have, as well as an outstanding spiritual leader. We will always remember his beautifully officiated church services and his inspiring sermons.

In spite of the pain he felt over the fate of Archbishop Valerian, Fr. John had much to look forward to and to live for. He knew he could share time in his retirement with the most important thing in his life besides the Church — his family. He was so excited and happy about the plans for his retirement, that he was already making specific commitments with his nieces and



Winter 1923: Fr. John and his sister Celie — together then and together all through his life.

nephews on arrangements to help him move and on plans for the time he would have to share with them. We remember his hope of retiring someday with his sister and her husband.

Although Fr. John is comfortable in the arms of our Lord, we know that he would have liked to share more time on this earth with his family and friends.

We miss you Fr. John! ❧

NEW AROY SPIRITUAL ADVISORS

V. Rev. Fr. Panteleimon Stanciu
Rev. Fr. George Treff

1993 AROY SPRING SPORTS TOURNAMENT

FEBRUARY 13-15

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PARISH BULLETIN NOTES



Regina, SK. St. George. As an ongoing project, the parish collects funds, food, and clothing for the Transition House for battered women and children, for the Wetmore School lunch program, and the "Adopt a Family" program.

Falls Church, VA. St. Mary. Our Fifth Anniversary was marked by a Divine Liturgy celebrated by His Grace Bishop NATHANIEL, followed by a banquet. Entertainment was a fine piano and violin recital. Then, Bishop NATHANIEL was retreat master for the Parish Retreat in the afternoon . . . Fr. Alexander defended the traditional Priesthood on the CNN Morning News television program.

Chicago, IL. Holy Nativity. Congratulations to Fr. and Dna. Ps. Zmed on their 50th Wedding Anniversary, and to Fr. Zmed on his 50th Anniversary in the Priesthood. Many Years!

Bridgeport, CT. St. Dimitrie. MacAROY organized a food drive for the needy. All had fun at their night of ice skating; also, at their tree trip for decorating ending with a pizza support . . . At St. Nicholas Eve Vespers, the children left their shoes in the vestibule for a St. Nicholas treat. They also made cookies and accompanied carolers to three nursing homes to deliver them.

Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Following Divine Liturgy on St. Nicholas Sunday, there was a procession of all the Church School children carrying their gifts for needy children which they placed by the icon of St. Nicholas . . . The Ladies Auxiliary had a Lunch and Bake Sale . . . On AROY Sunday, the youth sponsored a lenten Brunch.

Los Angeles, CA. Holy Trinity. Special services, a banquet, and a cultural program celebrated the Unification of Transylvania with Greater Romania . . . Fr. Constantin was invited to tape a Romanian greeting for the

Christmas Show on a local TV channel . . . In Michael Jackson's new video, "Heal the World," about 25 people from the Romanian community have special parts. Profit is to go to needy institutions and countries, including Romania.

Dearborn Hgts., MI. Sts. Peter & Paul. Our parishioners contributed funds to purchase a van for the Dormition monastery . . . Our Ladies Auxiliary sponsored a successful Arts & Crafts Show . . . Our AROY members enjoyed the Football Tournament in Canton. Several players were chosen as "All-Stars."

Warren, OH. Holy Resurrection. AROY sponsored an Advent Dinner, followed by the Church School Christmas play . . . We have a new TV/VCR combination for the use of our religious education program.

Youngstown, OH. Holy Trinity. AROY was busy collecting canned and dry foods for baskets for the needy and paper products for the Transfiguration Monastery. They sponsored a Turkey Raffle and enjoyed their Tree-Decorating get-together.

Akron, OH. Presentation Our Lord. We have printed and distributed a new Church Directory . . . AkROY sponsored the St. Nicholas Day Banquet . . . We have a newly-formed Junior Ak-ROY chapter . . . We hosted the Thanksgiving Eve service for all the area Orthodox Churches.

Canton, OH. St. George. We hosted the National AROY Sports Tournament . . . Many attended our Holiday Craft Show . . . Our Church School students enjoyed their Thanksgiving Feast served in the classrooms . . . Congratulations to V. Rev. Fr. Stanciu on the 30th Anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Many years!

Cleveland, OH. St. Mary. AROY sponsors monthly Brunches . . . Our "Original Christmas Craft Show" was a huge success . . . Congratulations to the Men's Team who brought back the AROY Football Championship . . . The Church School collected hats, scarfs and mittens for the needy. ☩

Compiled by Florence Sirb

SOLIA

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations and subscriptions:

November 20 - December 14, 1992

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WORLD CHURCH NEWS

St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Women's Sanctuary

A new Women's Sanctuary is being established in Cleveland, Ohio, to help provide shelter for some of the 10,000 homeless women in that city. The Sanctuary is located on West 14th Street and Starkweather behind St. George Orthodox Church. Your support is needed. Contact: Mother Ana, Director; St. Mary of Egypt Sanctuary; PO BOX 771025; Cleveland, OH 44107. Phone: (216) 843- 3621.

Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL)

The fifth annual meeting of the O.C.L., an Orthodox Christian movement of clergy and laity, was held in St. Louis, Missouri October 23-25, 1992, with the theme: Rediscovery and Renewal. The following communications were presented: Fr. Anthony Coniaris: "Syndiaconia — The Shared Role of the Laity in Church"; Archm. Eusebius Stephanou; "Proclaiming the Truth of Orthodox Renewal"; Fr. Steven J. Vlahos: "How Should the Church Address Interfaith Marriages?"; Fr. W. Gaines: "Ministry to Youth"; Mrs. Pauline Sarantopoulos: "Orthodox Religious Education"; Presvytera Ellen Gvosdev: "Women in the Church"; Dr. Paul Meyendorff: "Liturgy — Work of the Laity." The meeting also elected Nicholas Karakas as president and Nicholas Nicholau as editor of the two OCL publications, FORUM and NEWSLETTER. (Hellenic Chronicle, Nov. 26, 1992)

Teenagers Who Left The Church

A survey of unchurched adults found that most of them left church in their late teenage years. When asked why they left the church, they gave the following answers (Group Books): 26% — I got involved in other things; 20% — I was put off by hypocrites; 17% — Church was dull; 14% — It wasn't meeting my needs; 10% — I moved; 10% — I had questions the church could not answer; 9% — I got tired of it; 8% — I didn't like the priest or minister; 8% — My spiritual beliefs changed; 8% — Self righteous people made me leave; 7% — I resented appeals for money; 6% — I stifled my thinking; 4% — My parents stopped coming; 4% — I began doing things that conflicted with church teaching. Fewer teens attend church regularly or look to religious leaders for guidance on moral and ethical issues. Teens are more likely to be influenced by peers, the media, movies and popular music than clergy. (Reprinted from "Visnik", Dec. 1992)

Orthodox People Together

Ellwood City, Pa. — "One Lord, One Witness" was the theme for the Orthodox People Together's fall meeting at Holy Transformation Monastery. His Grace Bishop Maximos of Pittsburgh, OPT's spiritual advisor, led the discussion on ways to further Orthodox unity at the grass roots level through coordinated Royal Priesthood. Two other hierarchs participated along with the 30 lay delegates: Bishop Nicholas of the Carpatho-Russian Diocese and Bishop Mitrophan of the Serbian Diocese of Eastern America. OPT, an interjurisdictional network of Orthodox Christians dedicated to witness in North America, acts as a catalyst for inter-Orthodox cooperation, by sharing information, introducing people with similar ministries to each other, and publicizing and promoting support for active inter-Orthodox service projects and educational workshops in the Church.

Orthodox Christian Counseling Center (OCCC)

The OCCC provides qualified, professional counselors with a Christian outlook to assist individuals who may be experiencing a crisis and are in need of spiritual and emotional support to guide them towards wellness and wholeness. The Center's offices are located at St. Mark Orthodox Church, 3560 Loganway, Youngstown, OH 44501 Phone: (216) 759-8383.

Ecumenical Patriarch Visits Mt. Athos

The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I marked the first anniversary of his election with a pastoral visit to Mount Athos November 5-9, 1992. His visit was celebrated with joy by many monastic establishments of this one thousand year old heart of spirituality, and also "served as a warning to certain monastic groups on the peninsula who currently refuse to recognize his authority and have broken communion with other Orthodox." (The Church Messenger, Dec. 1992)

Serbian Orthodox History Release

A new book release invites you to order "Introduction to Serbian Orthodox Church History" by V. Rev. Nedeljko Grgurevich, 971-1111 St. Clair Road, Johnstown, Pa. 15905. Price per copy \$9.00 plus \$3.50 postage and handling.

Teacher Education and Certification Program

The Greek Archdiocese will soon complete a Teacher Education and Certification Program. After undertaking special training and fulfilling specific requirements, such as spiritual growth, methodology and service, teachers can obtain a certification from their diocesan bishop. In each of the above mentioned areas points will be earned by completing reading assignments, attending seminars, preparing lesson plans, observing classes, reports on church services, lectures or Bible classes, viewing educational videos, etc. Certification is not a requirement in the Greek Archdiocese, but is aimed at reinforcing the overall teaching abilities of the teachers who participate. (The Orthodox Servant, Nov. 1992)

Methodist, Orthodox Relations

In June 1990, the late ecumenical patriarch Dimitrios agreed with a U.S.-based Methodist delegation from the World Methodist Church (WMC) that "the time was ripe for theological conversations between Methodist and Orthodox" with the hope of a possible bilateral dialogue. His successor, His Holiness Bartholomeos I, pursued that initiative and last July 22-24, a first exploratory meeting took place in Oxford, England. The emphasis has been laid particularly on ecclesiology. The Methodists presented a paper titled "Methodist Ecclesiology and the Life of Love" while the Orthodox paper was titled "Orthodox Identity and the Church." While it was agreed that "it would be premature to think of sacramental and ecclesial communion," both delegations stated that "a dialogue would be beneficial to greater knowledge of each other. A second meeting of this small group is planned for July 1993. The Orthodox Church was represented by Bishop Kallistos Ware (England), Archbishop Boris Bobrinsky (France) and Protopresbyter George Dragas (England). (The Word, Nov. 1992) ✙

Compiled by Fr. Remus Gram

PARISH REGISTER

BAPTISMS

Ali, Jessica, daughter of Basil & Niculina Ali, London, ON. Holy Cross, London, ON. Godparents: Valentin & Angela Dobrin.

Andra, Steven, son of Ofelia C. & Mircea Andra, Chicago, IL. Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Maria & Michael Condei.

Apostol, Filip Nicola, son of Marian & Nicoleta Apostol, North York, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparent: Narcisa Nitulescu.

Belici, Bogdan Sorin, son of Mike & Elena Belici, Chicago, IL. St. Mary, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Mariana & Nicolae Selean.

Buciuman-Coman, Michael, son of Vasile & Liana Buciuman-Coman, Everett, MA. St. John, Woonsocket, RI. Godparents: Gheorghe & Natalia Voinea.

Craus, Brian Alexander, son of Ovidiu & Mirela Craus, Kitchener, ON. St. John, Kitchener, ON. Godparent: Marinel Pafaluta.

Giurovici, Michele Nicole, daughter of Stanco & Maria Giurovici, Chicago, IL. Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Eugen & Maria Deian.

Hidan, Adrian Raymond, son of Emil A. & Monica J. D. Hidan, Abingdon, MD. Holy Cross, Alexandria, VA. Godparents: Joyce Frances & Fred Thomas, Jr.

Kobilnyk, Gabriel Lee, son of Liviu V. Piuleac & Diane Kobilnyk, Philadelphia, PA. Descent Holy Ghost, Elkins Park, PA. Godparents: John & Monica J. Kuna, Christine Kobilnyk.

Kuna, Martin Alexander, son of John & Monica Kuna, Doylestown, PA. Descent Holy Ghost, Elkins Park, PA. Godparents: Rev. Fr. Dumitru & Psa. Rodica Sasu.

Meresie, Yodit, daughter of Gebremeskel Meresie & Hiwet Hadgu, Woodbridge, VA. Holy Cross, Alexandria, VA. Godparent: Mrs. Nighsty Dewelde.

Moldovan, Nick Dennis, son of Adronic Moldovan & Gabriela Cuciu, Fullerton, CA. Sts. Michael & Gabriel, Palm Springs, CA. Godparents: Cornel & Ana Ghisoiu.

Nema, Julien Sebastian, son of Adrian Virgilius & Ofelia Nema, Toronto, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Liviu & Rita Ciulei.

Negoescu, Corina Mariana, daughter of Radu & Christianne T. M. Negoescu, Bangor, PA. Holy Cross, Alexandria, VA. Godparents: Radu & Elena Vidrascu.

Panaiteescu, Dan Henry, son of Petru & Lucia M. Panaiteescu, Yucca Valley, CA. Sts. Michael & Gabriel, Palm Springs, CA. Godparents: Dumitru Lazar & Adriana Jderu.

Petco, Cristopher, son of Oliver & Angela Fofelzan Petco, Barrie, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Ioan & Doina Ispas.

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Predoi, Stephanie Casandra, daughter of Ionel C. & Marilena J. Predoi, Toronto, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Constantin & Rodica Jacob.

Raica, Nicoleta Eugenia, daughter of Eugene S. & Paun M. R. Raica, Sterling Hts., MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. Godparents: V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas & Sarah Liolin.

Strugari, Matthew Evan, son of Darrell & Debbie Strugari, Regina, SK. St. George, Regina, SK. Godparent: Brenda Berger.

Temple, Joran William Thomas, son of Russell & Laurisa Temple, Regina, SK. St. George, Regina, SK. Godparents: David & Kim Rotelick and Jason & Pamela Rotelick.

MARRIAGES

Coman, Vasile and Liana Buciuman, Everett, MA. St. John, Woonsocket, RI. Godparents: Gheorghe & Natalia Voinea.

Fariborz, Khaiat-Mofid and Aurelia Dobre, Montgomery, VA. Holy Cross, Alexandria, VA. Godparents: Lavinia Agache and Cindy & David Sim.

Beca, Florin H. and Catalina A. Stoescu, Chicago, IL. St. Mary, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Emil & Anca Stoescu.

Anca, Daniel and Kitty Tom, Chicago, IL. St. Mary, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Dan & Mariana Nitu.

Guirguis, Raafat and Valeria Muntenus, Willowdale, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Fathi & Laica Kozman.

Minore, William S. and Laura J. Wolloum, Ann Arbor, MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. Godparents: Dr. John & Beth A. Popovich.

Nicolaescu, Catalin I. and Corina Zaharia, Whitestone, NY. St. Dumitru, New York, NY. Godparents: Theodoros & Pake Karavasilis.

Savu, Cornel and Carmen Crihan, Kenilworth, ON. St. John, Kitchener, ON. Godparents: Trifu & Linca Spariosu.

Sirghiuta, Florentin and Lucia Verman, North York, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Adrian & Rodica Neamtu.

Smeu, Stanel and Elena Cenuse, Chicago, IL. Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Viorel & Maria Avramica.

DECEASED

Chis, Ion V., 74. St. George, Toronto, OH.

Cotet, Peter Ivan, 74. Sts. Peter & Paul, Dearborn Hgts., MI.

De Mintici, Marioara, 51. St. Mary, Grass Lake, MI.

Gabriel, Nicholas, 98. Holy Trinity, Youngstown, OH.

Guraluk, Nicolai T., 68. St. George, Regina, SK.

Paraian, Paraschiva (Pearl), 90. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

Popescu, Stefan R., 69. St. George, Toronto, ON.

Serafin, Anna, 89. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

Yanko, George, 100. Descent Holy Ghost, Elkins Park, PA.

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Issue	Deadline
February	January 14
March	February 11
April	March 11
May	April 15
June	May 13
July	June 10
August	July 15
September	August 10
October	September 16
November	October 14
December	November 11
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DATINELE DE IARNĂ

Anotimpul acesta în România parcă este vrăjit. Intr'o țară muntoasă, cum este a noastră, și cu păduri, copacii sunt plini de omăt, iar drumurile înzăpezite îi obligă pe oameni să stea mai mult în casă, la gura sobei. Nu ies afară decât pentru a da mâncare la vite. Incep basmele, nopțile de veghere, clăcile de tors lână și nevedit. Tocmai în cele două mari posturi de peste an, femeia româncă pune războiul de țesut pânză și covoare, pentru că atunci ea are mai mult timp: nimic de lucru pe afară iar în bucătărie mâncare simplu de gătit, e post. Nu se bea vin, nu sunt petreceri. În schimb este mult basm, poezie și dragoste în pacea intimă a familiei. Cine vrea să cunoască sufletul țăranului român așa cum este el, să intre în casa lui, mai ales iarna. Va vedea atunci, cum Românul se închină cu fața la Răsărit, de unde vine lumina, își face semnul crucii înainte și după mâncare, cum înainte de a bea apă dintr'un ulcior, suflă de trei ori în cruce, ca să alunge duhurile rele, înainte de a tăia pâinea, femeia face peste ea cu cuțitul semnul crucii de trei ori . . . și așa mai departe . . .

Dar în afară de viața lui obișnuită, alte tradiții și obiceiuri de rară frumusețe și de o deosebită valoare spirituală, sunt centrate în jurul celor două mari sărbători de iarnă: Crăciunul, adică Nașterea Domnului Hristos și Anul Nou. Am moștenit deja, dela strămoșii noștri Romani, sărbătoarea Anului Nou împodobită cu o mulțime de datini în legătură cu cultivarea pământului, căci ei erau agricultori. La aceste datini s'a mai adăogat poezia și legendele păstorilor Daci din Munții Carpați, care pe lângă multe alte îndeletniciri se mai ocupau și cu lucratul în lemn și cu răscolitul comorilor de aur din Valea Arieșului.

Cu mulți ani înainte de Hristos, în apropierea Anului Nou, Romanii sărbătoreau pe zeul lor Saturn, cu procesiuni de dansuri și scenete de teatru, cu oameni mascați și cu ceterași din casă în casă. Toate astea țineau mai multe zile în șir și se vorbea într'ânsele despre ocupații sau despre credințele lor în viață și moarte. Cu toate că oamenii s'au creștinat, mai târziu ei nu s'au putut lăsa nici de aceste obiceiuri păgânești, care în fond erau nevinovate și reprezentau viața lor de toate zilele. Deaceea, Sfinții Părinți ai Bisericii, după anul 325, au mutat sărbătoarea Nașterii Domnului Hristos chiar în mijlocul Saturnalelor romane; în

primul rând, pentru a abate atenția celor de curând botezați dela obiceiurile păgâne spre importanța praznicului creștin, bazat pe realitate și pe adevăr, iar în al doilea rând, era în intenția Sfinților Părinți de a curăți aceste obiceiuri de partea lor păgânească și de a le da un conținut creștin.

Aproape toate datinele românești de iarnă s'au îngrămădit între 20 Decembrie și 8 Ianuarie. La 20 Decembrie, în ziua lui Sfântul Ignatie Episcopul Antiohiei, în România se taie porcii. Se tăiau porcii și înainte de venirea lui Hristos, tot în această vreme. Pe când însă, strămoșii noștri îl aduceau sacrificiu zeului Saturn, creștinii de acum îl taie pentru îndestularea caselor și pentru veselia zilelor



Copiii umblă cu sorcova pe stradă

de sărbători. Se pun niște scânduri în mijlocul ogrăzii pe zăpadă, iar porcul tăiat se așează acolo și se pârlește cu paie, turnându-se pe el apă clocotită și se rade bine cu cuțitul. Prima bucățică din porc i se dă "mezinului" din casă, adică celui mai mic, care se suie călare pe porc și-și cere porția. Dacă-i băiat, mănâncă urechile, dacă-i fată, i se dă coada porcului, pentru ca să-i crească părul mare. Țiganii pământeni păstrează capul porcului până la "Sân Văsai," când îl împodobesc cu pânze colorate și hârtii, umblând cu el din casă în casă. Obiceiul acesta este din bătrâni și se chiamă "Vasilca." Este păstrat în Valea Dunării și amintește de timpul când robii de pe moșie se duceau la boer de Anul Nou, ca să-l "hiretisească."

Cont. la pag. 18

Tradiții creștine. Colindele. Steaua

Copiii pregătesc steaua, dintr'un cadru de carton acoperit cu hârtii colorate. În centru, are icoana Nașterii Domnului și niște clopoței. Cei trei copii care vor purta steaua închipuie pe cei trei Magi, iar "Cântecul de Stea" este un rezumat al Evangheliei ce se citește în ziua praznicului la biserică. În prima zi de Crăciun, toți "stelarii" trebuie să fie la biserică, pentru că stelele trebuiesc binecuvântate de preot. De aici vor porni, colindând tot satul, până în ziua de Sfântul Ion.

În Transilvania, pe lângă stea, copiii mai pregătesc "Viflaimul" și "Irozii," niște mici piese de teatru, care reprezintă Nașterea lui Iisus. Ele se vor juca în fiecare casă, însoțite de cântec de colinde. Obiceiul acesta se găsește și în Italia. Folkloristul italian Cossar amintește de stea, de Vicleim și de Irozi, ca venind dela Tracii încreștinați, pen-



tru că în secolul al 10-lea, o parte din Români, numiți Morlaci, au fost împinși de slavi până în Croația de azi și în Italia, ducând cu ei aceste tradiții.

Toate colindele românești sunt creștine. Sunt foarte variate în conținut, cuprinzând nu numai evenimentul Nașterii Domnului, ci și alte pasagii din Vechiul și Noul Testament, puse în versuri. Unele din ele nu amintesc de texte biblice, dar totuși, sunt pline de învățături creștine. Ele se adresează tuturor, după vârstă și ocupație. Este colindă specială pentru preot, pentru feciori, pentru fete mari; colindă la "jude," adică la primarul satului, colinda vânătorilor, a măcelarilor . . . etc.

Nu mai mult decât cu 55 de ani în urmă,



Tinerimea Creștină din România dădea concursuri de datine strămoșești, la Ateneul Român din București. Concursurile erau organizate, fie de Patriarhia Română, fie de Fundațiile Regele Carol I, fie de Ministerul Culturii Naționale. Întotdeauna cultura națională în România a fost nedespărțită de tradițiile bisericești. . . .

Ajunul de Crăciun este o zi de post. Preotul și cantorul umblă cu icoana Nașterii Domnului în fiecare casă. De obicei, bătrânii nu mănâncă până când preotul ajunge la casa lor să binecuvînteze masa, chiar dacă asta se întâmplă să fie noaptea târziu. După aceea stau la masă, ospătându-se cu sarmele de post și vin. În Moldova și Bucovina, femeile servesc în ajun o mâncare numită "pelincile Domnului," niște turte de grâu, uscate pe cuptor și apoi încropite în apă caldă și presărate cu nucă și cu zahăr. Ele preînchipuiesc scutecel în care a fost înfășat pruncul Iisus, în ieslea Betleemului. Se aprinde în colțul dela icoane o candelă cu untdelemn și nimeni nu doarme în noaptea aceasta, așteptând colindătorii. Porțile sunt închise, ușile descuiate și câinii legați. Satul răsună de "Lerului Domnului," niște cuvinte care par fără înțeles, dar ele nu sunt altceva decât traducerea lui "Aleluia Doamne" cu care Biserica preamărește Nașterea Mântuitorului Cristos.

În Transilvania auzim: "Liliuară și-a nost' Domn"

În Muntenia: "Homdai Lerului, flor' dă mărului"

În Basarabia: "Ian voler ș'un flor' de măr" . . .

Cont. la pag. 18

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ar Sârbii, care au împrumutat colindele dela Români, zic: "Hoja Leru Dolerije."

Ca să fie mai mare farmecul sărbătorii, copiii are colindă la fereastră mai fac și unele glume. Dacă darul primit a fost bun, ei adaogă pentru hazde o poezie în care le spune să fie:

Ca merii, ca perii.

In mijlocul verii.

Câte pene pe cocoși

Atâția copii burduhoși.

Este interesant că învățatul lingvist italian Silvio Mitis spune că obiceiul de a se umbla cu colinda la Crăciun ("Kolendari"), se găsea pela anul 1000 într-o insulă din Marea Adriatică, adus acolo de Macedoneni sau de Morlaci. Și, tot așa spune despre colindători, că dacă nu le plăcea darul dat de familie, strigau:

Quanti ciodi ce in sta porta

Tanta diavoli que vi porta,

adică, "câte cuie sunt pe ușa voastră, atâția draci vă poarte."

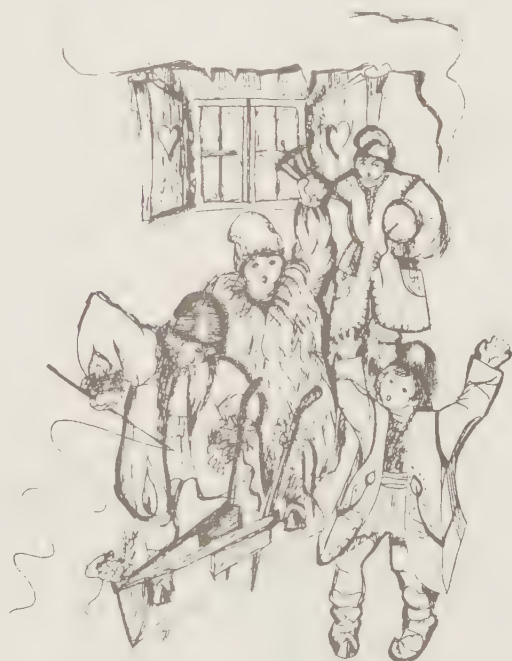
Desigur, că nu-i nimic serios în aceste ciudate elicitări satirice. Românul, cum spune poetul Valer Alexandri, "este un hâtru bun de glume" și-i place să contribuie cu ceva original la veselia sărbătorilor. Țăranul român crede despre "Moș Crăciun" că a fost proprietarul ieslei din Betleem în care s'a născut Iisus Hristos, iar despre baba Crăciunoaie, că ar fi moșit pe Maica Domnului. Se amestecă legenda cu adevărul, însă toate sunt combinate într'un complex frumos, artistic.

Tradiții păgâne încreștinate. Anul Nou

Sărbătoarea Crăciunului este mai mult religioasă și se petrece în familie, între rubedenii și prieteni, cu povestiri și cu mai multă muzică, de când Anul Nou este mai păgân și mai dramatic. Fetele se ascund prin case, în ajunul Anului Nou, de teamă că vin "mascații" sau în Bucovina vine "malanca." Măștile reprezintă personajii din mitologia românească, dela zâne și feți frumoși, până la lei-paralei, vrăjitoare și zmei sau reprezintă mici piese muzicale: capra, ursul, nunta românească, care se joacă în fiecare casă, sau chiar pe stradă.

Toate aceste datini însă au fost centrate în jurul "plugușorului," cu clopoței și cu harapnice, cu nuget de buhai și cu instrumente muzicale, cu care ceata de feciori merge dela casă la casă. Ei spun în versuri povestea pâinii, dela sămânța de grâu ce cade în pământul mănăs, până la colacii cu a-

buri calzi, pe care țărâncă îi scoate din cuptor cu lopata. Povestea este întreruptă de urături și chiote și pocnete de bici, cu care se îndeamnă boii la arat. În unele din aceste urături este vorba de "Bădica Traian," care nu-i altcineva decât împăratul roman cuceritor al Daciei; în altele se amintește de Sfântul Vasile, pe care Biserica îl serbează la 1 Ianuarie, dar pe care Românii l-au transformat într'un țăran chiabur, cu vite și pogoane. În Moldova, cine a mers cu plugușorul, trebuie să meargă a doua zi să samene grâu pe la aceleași case, pe unde au arat. Uneori, plugușorul este un adevărat



plug cu patru boi împodobiți cu crengi de brad și cu colaci în coarne. Copiii umblă cu sorcova pe stradă, în ziua de Sfântul Vasile, lovind încet pe trecători cu niște crengi de flori uscate și dorindu-le "mulți ani."

În general, fetele mari nu iau parte la desfășurarea acestor datini de Anul Nou. Ele stau acasă și pregătesc colaci pentru feciorii care vin cu uratul, fură busuiocul băieților dela plugușor și-l pun sub pernă ca să viseze frumos, dezghioacă 12 foi de ceapă, după numărul lunilor din an și le presară cu sare. Care din ele vor lăsa apă, până în dimineața de Anul Nou, însemnează că lunile acelea vor fi roditoare, iar foile uscate reprezintă lunile secetoase.

Boboteaza și cu Sfântul Ioan aproape că formează una și aceeași sărbătoare. În ajun, când

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preotul umblă cu crucea și stropește casele cu apă sfințită, se ține post negru. Copii îmbrăcați în cămăși albe, ținând în mână clopoței, deschid calea preotului prin troienele de zăpadă strigând "Kira Leisa," adică Doamne miluește, iar gazda răsplătește truda copiilor cu bomboane și nuci. Se cântă și atunci colinde cu minunea dela Iordan și cu:

Ionu, Sânt' Ionu

Nănașu lui Dumnezeu

Și cumătru lui Sân' Petru.

... Dar, înafară de preot, nimeni nu se duce din casă 'n casă.

În ziua de Bobotează, după Sfânta Liturghie, se face procesiune la cea mai mare apă curgătoare din sat, sau la vreun izvor, pentru sfințirea apelor. În timpul slujbei, vânătorii și pădurarii se



pregătesc să împuște peste ape ca să alunge duhurile necurate. Acest obicei astăzi, și-a păstrat doar semnificația festivă a unui foc de artificii. Epitropii bisericii pregătesc din timp o cruce de ghiață; o cruce de lemn este aruncată în apă de preot, iar feciorii se aruncă s'o scoată, chiar dacă-i ger de crapă pietrele. În Județul Muscel și la Curtea de Argeș cete de oameni tineri umblă pe stradă cu "iordănitul." Pe cine-l întâlnesc, îl ridică în sus cu chiote de bucurie iar cel "iordănit" trebuie să facă cinste.

În ziua aceea, toate apele pământului sunt sfinte.

Cu acestea, datinele de iarnă nu s'au încheiat dar s'a terminat carnavalul. Cu tristețe țărancă s'apucă iarăși de tors și pune pânza la nevedită. Țăranii trebăluiesc prin șură, punând dinții la greblă sau ascuțind fierul de plug . . . A mai rămas doar bucuria mâncărilor dulci, pregătite cu costițe afumate sau cu ciolane de porc rămase dela Crăciun. Totuși, micile sărbători populare de iarnă nu s'au încheiat; depinde în ce regiune a țării te găsești. Nu este îngăduit de pildă, să lucrezi la Sân Petru de iarnă (16 Ianuarie), pentru că în ziua aceea Sân' Petru împarte lupii la hotare, iar "Atanasiile" (18 Ianuarie) trebuie ținute cu strășnicie, ca să fim feriți vara de trăsnete. Cu "aghiazma dela Trif" se stropesc grădinile, căci Sfântul Mucenic Trifon (1 Februarie) apără pomi de omizi și via de mană. A doua zi, adică de "Stratenii" iese ursul din bârlog, să vadă dacă miroase a primăvară, iar la 24 Februarie sunt "Dragobetele," o sărbătoare populară a ghiocilor când țigăncile din București îi leagă cu fir roșu de lână și îi oferă la feciori, zicând: "ia, mâncate-a-maica" pentru aleasa inimii, ca:

Cei ce se iubesc

Să se înfrățească

Să se însoțească

Să se 'nsurățească' . . .

Deși poporul român e muncitor și harnic, este în același timp și un mare îndrăgostit de obiceiuri și datini, așa cum spunea Ion Creangă: "Să dea Dumnezeu tot anul să fie sărbători și numai o zi de lucru și atunci să fie praznic și nuntă."

Păr. Roman Brag

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Deasemenea vă rugăm să includeți comentariile dumneavoastră.

Vă mulțumim pentru interesul și sprijimul ce ni-l arătați. ☸

CÂT DE MULT NE-AM ÎNDEPARTAT DE DUMNEZEU

Mulți vor zice: Ce vrei să spui cu aceste cuvinte, cât de mult ne-am îndepărtat de Dumnezeu? Noi și toți ai noștri, și pe câți îi știm, poporul nostru și alte popoare cred în Dumnezeu, deci, toți sunt apropiați lui Dumnezeu. Nici cei care au fost forțați de comuniștii-atei, ca să se înscrie ca membri în partidul lor și aceia cu crezut mai cred în Dumnezeu. Cred că cuvintele D-tale te ofensează când ne spui, că ne-am îndepărtat de la Dumnezeu, în timp ce noi suntem membrii Bisericii și credem în Dumnezeu, nu suntem ateisti.

Ca răspuns la cele de mai sus, voi spune că nu este suficient să zici, că crezi în Dumnezeu, că există un Dumnezeu și că nu ești ateist, căci Sf. Scriptură ne afirmă că și “diavolii cred că este Dumnezeu,” dar ei sunt contrarii Lui. (Iacob 2:19). Nu este suficient numai să plătești o membrărie la o biserică, trebuie să o și cercetezi în fiecare Duminecă și sărbătoare. Trebuie să cunoști Cuvântul și toată învățătura pe care o propovăduiește Biserica, fiindcă e primită de la Dumnezeu și de la Fiul Său, Domnul nostru Iisus Hristos. Trebuie să crezi și să împlinești poruncile lui Dumnezeu, căci “credința fără fapte este moartă,” așa ne spune Sf. Apostol Iacob, la cap. 2:20.

Bună oară, noi susținem că suntem creștini, să le punem, deci, întrebarea: Câți din noi îl cunoaștem pe Domnul Iisus Hristos și îi aplicăm învățătura Sa dată nouă și cuprinsă în Noul Testament? Câți din cei botezați în numele Sfintei Treimi și miruiți cu pecetea Sfântului Duh, încreștinați și predați Bisericii lui Hristos cercetează regulat Biserica, se roagă zilnic lui Dumnezeu și țin legătura spirituală cu Dumnezeu, îndeplinesc faptele îndurării trupești și sufletești, prin care să se scutească dragostea lor către Dumnezeu și către aproapele? Câți din creștinii noștri împlinesc cea mai înaltă poruncă a Mântuitorului, de a iubi și a se ruga chiar și pentru dușmanii lor? Câți din cei care susțin că cred în Dumnezeu aduc rugăciuni de mulțumire lui Dumnezeu și jertfesc din cele ce au, ajutând Biserica și societățile de binefacere, sau ajută pe săracii pe cari îi cunosc ei și în același timp

să aducă laude și preamărire lui Dumnezeu, pentru sănătatea lor și a familiei lor și pentru toate cele materiale și spirituale ce le posedă, pentru că toate acestea, precum și însăși ființa lor, își au existența din darurile și înalta milostivire a lui Dumnezeu.

Cum putem să spunem noi, că suntem aproape de Dumnezeu, numai prin faptul că afirmăm că este un Dumnezeu, care a făcut cerul și pământul, etc., dacă noi nu împlinim voia Lui, îi călcăm poruncile și învățătura Lui. Săvârșim fapte, care sunt contrare voinței Sale și acelea ne fac urâți înaintea Lui, ne fac dușmanii Lui și ne îndepărtează de la fața Lui.

Este totuși o categorie de creștini, care se socotesc ei înșiși ca foarte buni, de fapt ei nu fac rele, nu vatămă pe nimeni, nu blestemă, nu înjură, nu asupresc pe alții, din contră sunt foarte respectuoși, încât lumea îi socotește de “oameni ai lui Dumnezeu,” dar le lipsesc totuși faptele credinței. Ei nu ajută pe nevoiași, văduve, orfani, săraci, nu sunt dispuși de a face binele și încă ei găsesc întotdeauna motive, că toți ar putea avea situația materială pe care o au dânsii, dar sunt leneși, nechibzuiți, pătimiși, etc. Ce folos este pentru astfel de creștini, că nu ar avea păcate grele, văzute și știute de oameni, dacă ei au păcate neștiute de oameni, dar Dumnezeu le știe: sunt plini de păcate capitale, grele, ca mândria, zgârceania, lăcomia după cele materiale, ne iubire de aproapele și altele. Și ce păcat mai mare poate să fie decât acela de a nu împlini Tatălui ceresc, de a iubi pe aproapele tău ca pe tine însuși, de a face fapte bune și încă de le face fără de a aștepta vreo răsplată, laude, recunoștință. Nimic decât numai gândul și hotărîrea de a face binele, știind că aceea este voia lui Dumnezeu. Sfânta Scriptură ne spune clar: “Căci mult i se va cere oricui i s’a dat mult și de la cine au încredințat întru belșug, vor cere cu prisos” (Luca 12:48). La a doua Lege stă scris: “. . . nu-ți împietri inima și nu închide mâna, față de fratele tău sărman.” (15:7), iar Sf. apostol Pavel scrie lui Timotei: “Celor bogați . . . poruncește-

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le să facă ce e bine, să se înavuțească în fapte bune, să fie darnici, să fie cu inimă largă.” (I Tim. 6:18).

Ce preț poate avea un copil în fața tatălui său, chiar dacă nu face fapte rele, dacă el nu ascultă porunca, ori sfatul tatălui său? Neascultarea unui astfel de copil produce în sufletul tatălui amărăciune, durere, care îi produce o suferință greu de suportat, ce nu se poate vindeca și aceea îi distruge dragostea părintească. Oare faptele noastre, care sunt contrare voinței lui Dumnezeu, cum sunt ele primite și socotite? Răspunsul îl avem în Sf. Scriptură în mai multe locuri, la judecata viitoare, când fiecare va primi răsplata faptelor săvârșite. Cel mai lămurit loc este la Sf. Evangelist Matei 25:31-46.

Trăim într’o epocă de mari frământări sociale, plină de curenți de liberalizare, de materialism, ateism, etc., care îndeamnă tineretul spre o viață contrară moralei creștine, amăgindu-l cu o fericire extremă, folosind o literatură imorală, care duce la tot felul de patimi și acțiuni periculoase, ca: morfinomania, drogurile, beția, furtul, crima, desfrâul, lipsa de respect față de părinți, față de autorități, față de bătrâni și altele. Este de ajuns ca un tânăr să fie atins numai de un singur păcat din cele de mai sus și acela, este pierdut, îndepărtat de la fața lui Dumnezeu. Atunci ce să mai zicem de indivizii care propagă astfel de curenți antisociale și antireligioase.

Deși epoca noastră, secolul al 20-lea, a dat omenirii cele mai înalte invenții, cele mai sofisticate mijloace de ușurarea muncii individului, cele mai ușoare căi pentru realizarea progresului material, nu vedem o lume mai bună, mai fericită. Din contră, vedem destulă mizerie materială, oamenii sunt tot mai nemulțumiți, lipsa de înțelegere reciprocă, ura și dușmănia în creștere, etc. Bolile s’au înmulțit simțitor față de trecut, în loc să dispară în raport cu progresul înaintat în medicină, în știință, etc. Spitalele se înmulțesc și nu pot face față cu bolile ce au apărut de curând și se înmulțesc bolnavii îngrijorător. Toate acestea nu sunt altceva decât dovada cea mai evidentă că omenirea s’a îndepărtat foarte mult de la Dumnezeu și Legea Lui.

Omul zilelor noastre, în orbirea lui sufletească și în neascultarea lui față de învățăturile sfinte date de Dumnezeu omenirii, se crede că este supra om,

dar realitatea ne dovedește că, comportarea lui este mult mai inferioară decât a bunicilor noștri, care nu au avut radio, televizor, telefon, automobile, avion și atâtea alte aparate electrice și electronice care aduc un mare confort vieții actuale. Confortul și comoditatea individului nu îi aduc fericirea, nu îi aduc liniștea și pacea sufletească. Din contră, îl ațâță la acțiuni care îl duc spre dorințe tot mai nesănuțoase, care îi îmbolnăvesc trupul și sufletul.

Liniștea, pacea sufletească, mulțumirea și fericirea, după care tânjește sufletul uman, nu se pot câștiga decât numai prin apropierea de Dumnezeu, deci, omul trebuie să înțeleagă, că nu la petreceri, etc., ci numai în depozitul de învățătură dumnezeiești, păstrate cu sfințenie în rânduielile sfintei Biserici, care sunt la dispoziția tuturor celor ce le doresc, precum și în cărțile de rugăciuni, în Sf. Scriptură și în literatura religioasă, pe care se poate folosi oricând acasă și ostenind pentru a se adapta la aplicarea învățăturilor aflate, își poate crea și întări caracterul bun și de adevărat creștin. Mântuitorul ne spune că numai prin El poate cineva să ajungă la Tatăl, numai prin împlinirea învățăturilor primite de la El, prin Sfânta Biserică ne putem apropia de Dumnezeu. Mântuirea lui omul este un dar dumnezeiesc, dar îl putem câștiga numai prin ascultarea și împlinirea poruncilor lui Dumnezeu. Trebuie să ne silim, cu orice preț, să ne câștigăm mântuirea, “Că Dumnezeu așa a iubit lumea, încât a dat pe Fiul Său Unul-Născut, pentru ca oricine crede într’ânsul să nu piară, ci să aibă viața veșnică. (Romani 3:16). Și viața veșnică sau mântuirea nu se poate câștiga decât numai prin pocăință. Iată ce ne spune Mântuitorul: “N’au venit să chem pe drepti, ci pe păcătoși, la pocăință.” (Matei 9:13)

Deci, cheia mântuirii și apropierea de Dumnezeu este pocăința, care ne aduce la picioarele Crucii, pe care s’a jertfit Mântuitorul Iisus Hristos și prin vărsarea Sângelui Său, s’au spălat păcatele tuturor celor ce s’au întors și a celor ce se vor întoarce spre El, cu pocăință. Să ne îndemnăm unii pe alții și să ne luăm curajul ca să ne cercetăm care este raportul nostru cu Dumnezeu, sau cum îndeamnă preotul la ecteniile de la sfintele servicii divine: Pe noi înșine, și unii pe alții, și toată viața noastră lui Hristos Dumnezeu să o dăm. ✠

Preot Romulus Radu

ÎNCHINARE CEREASCĂ

Autor Richard J. Ballew

(fost pastor Baptist, astăzi preot Ortodox)

CINE SUNT EU ȘI CARE ESTE ROSTUL EXISTENȚII MELE

Întrebarea este destul de simplă, dar are implicații profunde. Această întrebare s'a pus încă în zorile existenței omului. Dela filosofii antici, care contemplau realitatea supremă ca pe o idee filosofică și până la copilul, care pentru prima oară filosofează, întrebarea despre rostul omului în viață constituit întotdeauna un subiect de mare interes.

Biblia ne învață că oamenii: bărbați, femei și copii au fost creați pentru a adora, a se închina, a iubi și a sluji lui Dumnezeu Tatăl, Fiul și Duhul Sfânt. Astfel, adorația lui Dumnezeu care a făcut toate este bătaia de inimă a sufletului omului.

Când această închinare are loc, se întâmplă două lucruri cruciale. Cel mai important este că prin ea Dumnezeu cel întreit este preamărit. Pentru că, mai întâi de toate, Dumnezeu este Cel ce a creat totul din nimic și Cel care dă viață clipă de clipă, la toate vietățile. Fără îndoială că Dumnezeu este vrednic de închinarea noastră. El nu are nevoie de cinstea noastră, însă noi nu putem trăi fără să-L adorăm.

În al doilea rând, când o adevărată închinare are loc, omul trăiește și simte rostul suprem al existenței sale. Este sădit în noi. Închinarea Sfintei Treimi dă vieții adevăratul ei rost și dă fiecăruia răspunsul definitiv la întrebarea: Cine sunt eu și care este rostul existenței mele.

DOUĂ DIMENSIUNI BINE DEFINITE

Orice copil de școală învață că sunt anumite legi ale spațiului și timpului, potrivit cărora ne conducem viața pe care o trăim aici pe pământ. Adesea se vorbește de aceste legi din perspectiva patru dimensiuni: lungime, lățime, adâncime și timp. Acestea sunt coordonatele care rânduesc existența și activitatea omului pe pământ.

Când ne pregătim, de pildă, pentru o excursie cu avionul de la Los Angeles la New York, cineva ne poate întreba foarte firesc: "Cât de departe este New York?" sau "Cât de mult timp îți va lua să ajungi acolo?" Odată ce avionul este în aer, aceeași persoană te-ar putea întreba: "La ce înălțime zburăm acum?" Astfel de întrebări sunt

firești și potrivite atunci când este vorba de mișcarea noastră în dimensiunea pământească.

Dar mai există și altă dimensiune, care deși nu se vede cu ochii trupești, este tot atât de reală ca și cea despre care am învățat la școală. Aceasta poate fi numită dimensiunea cerească.

Nu este însă posibil să înțelegem această dimensiune cerească din perspectiva pământească. De fapt, atunci când încercăm, ne desorientăm și ne încurcăm foarte repede, iar mintea se întuneacă. Un cosmonaut sovietic foarte bine cunoscut a demonstrat acest fapt, ani de zile în urmă. După ce s'a întors pe pământ în urma unui zbor în cosmos, a remarcat că nicăieri în cosmos nu L-a văzut pe Dumnezeu. La o astfel de observație, creștinul ortodox răspunde: "Desigur că nu L-ai văzut, pentru că, deși ai călătorit prin spațiu, ai continuat să te miști în dimensiunile pământești!"

Nu vom putea nicodată să-L descoperim pe Dumnezeu dintr'o perspectivă atât de limitată, pentru că El nu este limitat de spațiu și timp. El există în Împărăția Sa cea Cerească, dincolo de limitele înțelegerii noastre.

Indiferent cât de multe cunoștințe despre univers va obține știința, o explorare pur fizică nu va putea descoperi niciodată locașul lui Dumnezeu. De fapt, o astfel de cercetare adesea duce fie la batjocură, cum a fost cazul cosmonautului sovietic, fie la disperarea agnosticismului care concludă: "Cine poate să știe?"

DACĂ NU ACOLO, UNDE ATUNCI?

Din nefericire, o astfel de atitudine intelectuală redusă, față de Dumnezeu, nu este specifică numai cosmonauților comuniști ateï. Din păcate, chiar și unii creștini au fost înșelați în a-L căuta pe Dumnezeu în timp și spațiu.

Astfel, unii interpreți ai Bibliei învață cu naivitate că Înălțarea Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos, descrisă în Faptele Apostolilor, capitolul I, ar fi fost un fel de călătorie prin spațiu. Ei presupun eventual că o astfel de călătorie s'ar fi sfârșit cumva într'un loc foarte departe care se numește "dreapta lui Dumnezeu." Din această perspectivă limitată, ei și-L imaginează pe Hristos șezând ca Fiul Omului, undeva în limitele timpului și spațiului.

ÎNCHINARE CEREASCĂ

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Te asigur, iubite cititorule, că această linie de gândire este cu totul împotriva adevărilor Sfin-tei Scripturi. Înălțarea lui Hristos nu a fost într'un cer limitat de timp și spațiu. Dimpotrivă, El a părăsit dimensiunea pământească și vizibilă a tim-pului și a spațiului și a intrat în dimensiunea nevăzută și veșnică, cerească, care este condusă de legile ei proprii. El nu va reîntra în dimensiunea pământească, în formă vizibilă, decât la a doua Lui venire. Atunci, așa cum a promis, "Tot ochiul îl va vedea" (Apocalipsă 1,7).

Deși cerul este nevăzut dimensiunii pământești, totuși el nu poate fi separat de dimensiunea pământească. Într-o formă tainică, cele două dimensiuni — cerescul și pământescul se mișcă împreună. Deaceea, omul cel înălțat la cer se descrie pe sine în Apocalipsă ca "Cel ce umblă în mijlocul Bisericii."

Dacă Fiul lui Dumnezeu ar fi fost limitat de spațiu și timp, atunci cum ar putea El să umble în mijlocul Bisericii Sale, după Înălțarea Sa la cer? Ba mai mult, dacă Dumnezeu Fiul este numai în cer, cum de a făgăduit Apostolilor promițându-le: "Iată eu sunt cu voi până la sfârșitul veacurilor?"

Cei care cred că realitatea este numai spațiu și timp natural că nu pot crede prezența între noi a Dumnezeului nevăzut, presupun în mod greșit că Domnul nu poate să fie prezent, între noi, și în același timp să șadă de-a dreapta Tatălui. Pen-tru ei, Cel ce s'a întrupat este acum limitat la dimensiunea timp și spațiu. Deaceea El este văzut de dâșii ca fiind undeva "foarte departe."

Obsedați de felul lor de a gândi, acești creștini ajung la concluzia, de pildă, că Domnul Iisus nu poate nicidecum să fie prezent în chip nevăzut, cu trupul Său preaslăvit în Sfânta Euharistie, deși Bi-serica a crezut acest adevăr întotdeauna, din începuturile ei. Astfel pentru ei pâinea și vinul eu-haristic devin simple simboluri.

Pentru cei ce cred însă că Dumnezeu Fiul este cu adevărat atotprezent, așa cum ne învață Scrip-turile, Domnul Hristos este într'adevăr prezent, în chip nevăzut, și la Sfânta Euharistie. Deaceea, pâinea și vinul care sunt jertfite, devin în mod tai-nic, Insuși Trupul și Sângele Domnului, așa cum El Insuși a spus (vezi Ioan Cap 6).

Cont. în luna Februarie

ELEVII BUCUREȘTENI CER INTERZICEREA AVORTURILOR

Una dintre primele libertăți obținute imedia după înlăturarea comunismului a fost legalizare avorturilor. La nici trei ani de la revoluție un studiu efectuat de un colectiv de medici în șas mari licee ale Capitalei, vizând testarea nivelulu culturii sexuale a tinerilor între 15 și 18 ani, s' soldat cu unele rezultate surprinzătoare. Debutu vieții sexuale se situează de regulă în jurul vârste de 15 ani la fete și 16 ani, la băieți. Surpriza ce mare nu vine însă de la această precocitate considerată normală din punct de vedere biologic ci de la faptul că 90 % din participanții anchetei fetele mai mult decât băieții, se pronunță împotriva avortului. Mai mult de jumătate din cei chestionați solicită chiar o lege care să restrângă dreptul l avort, fiind dispuși să participe la o largă campanie în acest sens. Elevii bucureșteni mai solicită cursuri de educație sexuală, începând cu clasa a IX-a. Unii elevi sunt de părere că aceste cursuri ar putea fi demarate chiar începând cu clasa a VII-a. Că siguranță, la aceste cursuri frecvența va fi mult mai ridicată decât la matematică sau fizică. ✽

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